

A snapshot of anti-cellulite products' consumption and pharmaceutical intervention

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Introduction: Cellulite is characterized by lumpy, dimpled flesh on the thighs, hips, buttocks and abdomen, sometimes described as orange peel texture (1). Although not a serious medical condition, but rather an aesthetical concern of many adolescent and adult women, it can impact significantly in their self-esteem. Many cellulite treatments are conducted without counseling and supervision of a health professional, disregarding possible interaction with drugs or contraindications due to a pre-existing medical condition. Moreover, remarkable results are advertised and most of these treatments have few scientific support (2,3) and do not live up to their claims. Anti-cellulite products can be either topical (cosmetics) or oral (food supplements), and their consumption pattern and efficacy perception are evaluated in this pilot work.

Materials and Methods: Anonymous questionnaire (n=86), validated and approved by Egas Moniz ethics committee, was applied in pharmacies (May-August 2017), to women ≥ 15 years old. Sample was characterized regarding socioeconomic status and those who had already used an anti-cellulite product were asked about preference (oral/topical), acquisition place, counseling, results obtained upon treatment and efficacy perception.

Results: The sample was mainly in the age groups of 18-34 (41.86%), 35-55 years (31.40%) and above 56 (20.93%); none of the respondents was below 18. Women held a secondary degree (24.42%) or higher (51.18%), lived in the city (69.77%) and considered their economic level as average (74.42%). Regarding consumption, 41.86% had already used a topical (77.22%), oral (5.56%) or a combination of both (19.44%) products; these were bought mainly in the pharmacy (72.22%), equally used seasonally/randomly (44.44%), mainly under pharmaceutical counseling (50.00%). However, 36.12% reported using the products at their own accord, without intervention of any health professional. Oral products were considered more effective than topical (11.11% vs 5.56%), although 38.89% were deemed to be equally effective and 44.44% did not know. Most women (69.44%) considered to have obtained results from the treatment, though sometimes below the expected (33.33%).

Discussion and Conclusions: The study has shown that women below 55 years old, with a higher education degree, are the greatest consumers of anti-cellulite products, which are mainly acquired in the pharmacy, though sometimes without pharmaceutical advice. While considered more efficacious (either alone or in combination with topical), food supplements were less consumed than cosmetics, probably due to the increased risk perception associated with the first. In fact, anti-cellulite products, especially those marketed as food supplements, are not without adverse effects and contraindications. Pharmaceutical counseling on dispensing anti-cellulite products is thus critical and should be regarded as a differentiating factor of the place of acquisition and an added-value to the product.

References:

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